



John Nygren

WISCONSIN STATE REPRESENTATIVE ★ 89TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Co-Chair, Joint Committee on Finance

John Nygren: Republicans show discipline with Bucks Arena skepticism

Last week the Bucks unveiled their new \$1 billion plan to build a sports entertainment district with a catchy hashtag campaign and flashy photos of the potential arena. However, one crucial aspect was missing from the unveiling: who is going to be contributing the money for this complex?

Currently, the city and county of Milwaukee have committed \$50 million, a mere 5% of total costs related to this project. To put that into perspective, Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett committed \$64 million of city funds to build a 2.5 mile streetcar route, which is 50% of all streetcar costs. If Mayor Barrett is willing to front 50% of the costs for a streetcar, but only 5% for an arena in his city, it begs the question: how serious is the Mayor about keeping the Bucks in Milwaukee?

In comparison to what other cities have contributed, Milwaukee's contribution is considerably less. Most recently, in Sacramento, the city is giving \$255 million, nearly 53% of all costs to build a new NBA stadium. The city of Brooklyn is also planning a \$1 billion arena; however, the city has committed \$205 million, 20.5% of costs. In fact, going back to 2001, no city has committed less to build an arena than Milwaukee. If we want to seriously move forward with keeping the Bucks in Milwaukee, we need the city and county to get serious about funding.

With all that said, it would be irresponsible not to recognize the importance of keeping the Bucks in Milwaukee. They provide Milwaukee with more economic promise than a streetcar ever could. The Arena alone provides thousands of jobs and the gross dollar impact of the Bradley Center, both direct and indirect, on the Milwaukee metro area totals \$204.5 million annually. However, should we do nothing, taxpayers are still left on the hook for \$120 million in maintenance costs and debt related to the Bradley Center.

The combination of a new arena and entertainment district has the possibility of serving as a statewide attraction. Even with the current outdated Bradley Center, nearly one out of three attendees travel from outside the metro Milwaukee area. These residents of Ozaukee, Washington and Waukesha counties generate \$41.6 million in revenue for metro Milwaukee every year. Finally, the Bradley Center's overall economic impact generates approximately \$8.8 million in local and state tax revenues every year. You don't need to look far to see the advantages of keeping the Bucks in Milwaukee.

As the budget process continues, I call on the city of Milwaukee and Milwaukee County to reevaluate their pledge to bringing a new arena to the city. If we want to get a deal done, we need all parties 100% committed to pitching in.